

PART I -- THE ANCESTRY

CHAPTER I

THE HARRIS-WINN LINES

The Harris Family In England And The Early Colonies

The name Harris is quite common in several sections of England, especially in Kent, Essex, Somerset, and Gloucester counties or shires. Many of that name in the last two counties named are largely of Welsh extraction, as they border on southeastern Wales; among these the name is frequently spelled differently. As all the sections named are contiguous to seaports they contributed liberally to the early settlement of America, particularly in Virginia and the Carolinas.

As a matter-of-fact statement and not at all as a boast, it should be said that while found in almost every station in life, many of the Harris name have occupied prominent places in England. Burke's Encyclopedia of English Heraldry gives notices of thirty-four different coats of arms granted at various times to persons of that name. Porter, the genealogist, gives that of the America-Virginia Arms: Argent, a lion rampant; over all a chevron ermine. Crest, a falcon with outstretched wings. But this is given simply as a matter of history. In our American Democracy there is no place for heraldry; and except for the value of inherited traits it makes little difference whether an ancestor came to America with wealth and a title, paid his passage with money or as a hired servant, or had *her* way paid with a bundle of dried tobacco!

Owing to the great frequency of the name, all attempts to trace the ancestry back of the father, Thomas, of our immigrant ancestor, John Harris, were early abandoned. The Harris People whence our ancestors came, lived in that section of England just east of the Bristol Channel, and were partly of Welsh descent. Many of these, all more or less related, took an active part in the settlement of Virginia and to a smaller extent of other colonies. Of these latter were the following: 1 Thomas Harris, wife and children settled at Charleston, a colony of Massachusetts, in 1633. 2 Will and Thomas Harris, brothers, came from Bristol, England in the good ship "Lyon," with Roger Williams in 1630. This William was one of the twelve men who organized the first Baptist Church at Providence, R. I. 3 James Harris

and wife, Sarah, came to Connecticut in 1650. 4 Daniel Harris came to Massachusetts in 1726. Married first, Mary Ballard, 1726; second, Lydia Hill. He had three sons and seven daughters.

THE HARRIS FAMILY IN VIRGINIA

While some of the Harris Family were probably members of the original London Company in 1607, there is no record of it. The following from Brown's Genesis of the United States shows membership in the succeeding companies as follows:

Second Virginia Charter, Period II, 1609; 1 Thomas Harris, subscribed 25 pounds. 2 John Harris, his son. Third Virginia Charter, Period III, 1611 - 1614; 1 Sir Christopher Harris, 2 Sir Arthur Harris, 3 John Harris, 4 Roger Harris, 5 Sir William Harris. None of the Harris charter members but John, and possibly Roger, ever came to America. Sir Arthur and Sir William were members of Parliament. They all simply helped in what was known to be but an experiment. John Harris was a younger son and as such had set out to make his own fortune. Doubtless the "Thomas Harris Gentleman," who subscribed the 25 pounds did so to help along his son, John, our immigrant ancestor.

John and a Thomas Harris, who was his first or second cousin, came to the colony in 1611; George and Samuel in 1615, and others among whom were William and James in 1623. There were probably others who came later. These were all related to each other and their descendants spread into Henrico, Powhatan, New Kent, Louisa, Patrick, and adjoining counties, and later into Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Owing to the general illiteracy during the first century few family records were kept and only fragments of these can be found. But in the land office at Richmond are records of deeds and grants of land to many of the early Harris families; and in the various counties and churches records of their wills, land transfers, births, marriages, and deaths. But except for baptismal records and wills the family relationship is not indicated. From the former it appears that many of the family were Presbyterians.

As our ancestors and their kinfolks were involved in the events and tragedies of the early colony, these may be briefly noted. The first colonists sent over in 1609, with abundant provisions, proved to be a worthless lot absolutely unfit for pioneer life. In the absence of Governor Gates, John Smith was able to control them. But when he had to return to England in the fall discipline was overthrown. At the end of six months out of the original 500 all but 60 had perished! This was entirely due to their own wasteful

improvidence and brutal treatment of the Indians, who at first had been rather friendly. But for the intervention of Pocahontas the infuriated Indians would have destroyed all the obnoxious whites, and would have doubtless been justified in the main in so doing.

Such was the situation that when Governor Gates returned with four small ships (he had been wrecked in the Bermudas) in May, 1610, he deemed it best to take on board the starved, miserable remaining men and abandon the colony. This was done—but as they were leaving the harbor they met three large ships with an abundance of supplies and a fresh lot of sturdy colonists of a much better class, and all went back to the abandoned cabins. They held a Thanksgiving service in the rude church, much to the amazement of the spying Indians, who had thought they were well rid of the unwelcome intruders.

Under wise management the colony prospered and when in 1613 Pocahontas married John Rolfe, all trouble with the Indians ceased, and as long as Powhatan lived there was unbroken peace. The year 1619 is noted for three great historic events. 1 The establishment of the House of Burgesses, a form of representative government. 2 The landing and sale of negro slaves at Jamestown. 3 The coming over of a hundred honest young women, and later several times that number, to become wives of the colonists. These had to each pay the price of his wife's transportation, which was a certain number of pounds of dried tobacco! All the girls quickly found husbands; these soon gave up all thought of returning to England and settled down to making a happy home in the New World. It was by far the best move of all for the advancement of the colony which was soon flourishing, with new immigrants of a better type than ever constantly arriving. (Tradition says that some of the Harris men availed themselves of wives in the manner described above, but no names are mentioned; most of them seemed to have brought their wives with them).

But Powhatan died and his brother, Opecchankano became chief. He had always hated the whites, and at once began cunning plans to exterminate them: the crafty chief pretending friendship, kept his plans so secret that when he made the sudden attack on the settlements in March, 1622, over 400 men, women and children were slain in less than an hour after the first war whoop. Death in all ghastly forms the savages could devise swept a hundred miles along the James River. Only Jamestown and vicinity escaped through warning by a friendly Indian just the evening before. The town prepared for the attack and sent out warning as far as they could.

Led by Jamestown men the enraged settlers turned on the Indians with even more than their own savagery. Every man who could handle a gun took to the field and hunted them down without mercy; they were slaughtered right and left and driven back far into the wilderness. It was over 20 years before they again troubled the whites. Both John Harris (our ancestor) and the Thomas Harris who came over with him in 1611, took an active part in the campaign against the Indians. Thomas, who had become a Captain, was second in command of the forces, and a Thomas Osborne first.

While John Harris did his part in both military and civil affairs it evidently must have been in a quiet way that did not bring him into prominence like his cousin, Thomas. He was however a member of the Shirley Hundreds Burgesses in 1629. Thomas Harris was not only Captain of the militia for many years and appointed second in command against the Indians in 1622, but was a member of the House of Burgesses in 1623, '39 and '47. In the State Library at Richmond, Va., is a chart of the family tree of Captain Thomas Harris. This Thomas Harris must not be confused with our ancestor Thomas, the father of John Harris. As the records show, Captain Thomas came to this country in "1611, at the age of 38" and so was born in 1573; our ancestor, John Harris, as the records show, was born in 1588, and so was about 15 years younger than Captain Thomas. "Thomas Harris, Gentleman," our ancestor and member of the Second Virginia Charter, was born approximately in 1550, and never left England.

The old Indian Chief, Opecchankano, now past 90 years of age, again rallied the Indians against the whites in 1644. In the sudden surprise attack, over 300 whites were killed the first day. But the colonists now numbered over 20,000, and turning savagely upon the Indians, annihilated the once powerful tribe of which Powhatan had been chief, and compelled the other tribes to give up to them a vast area of their territory. Except for occasional marauding bands the Indians gave the settlers no further trouble for nearly a generation.

Quite a number of the Harris Family were involved in the so-called "Bacon's Rebellion," as they lived in or near Henrico county, which was the home of Nathaniel Bacon. In connection with practically all the other planters he organized military forces and led them against the Indians, who were again attacking the frontier. He thoroughly routed the Indians but in so doing mortally offended Governor Berkeley, a vicious, unprincipled man who did not care that the Indians killed and scalped settlers as long as he had a monopoly of the beaver fur trade with the savages. Berkeley denounced Bacon as a traitor, but the great majority was with Bacon, and Berkeley was forced to leave Jamestown. To

get rid of the governor and the obnoxious “royalists” the settlers burned Jamestown, setting fire to their own houses. Nothing was left of the original town except the church tower and some tombstones.

The insurgent planters would doubtless have succeeded in driving Berkeley out, but Bacon was taken suddenly sick and soon died. There was no competent leader to take his place and the governor quickly regained control. The vindictive Berkeley forthwith hanged twenty-two of the planters who had sided with Bacon; among these were at least two of the Harris descendants, while others were under arrest. Berkeley had planned to execute several more but was stopped by the King, who soon recalled him. The happy colonists fired cannon and burned great bonfires in their rejoicing over his departure.

Virginia continued to suffer from bad rulers and there was another insurrection, but our ancestors were not involved in this. After the accession of King William and Queen Mary the colony was in general well governed and prospered so well that by the time of the Revolution it had increased many fold in population and was the most powerful in some ways of all the colonies. Descendants of the Harris immigrants became quite numerous in Henrico and New Kent counties, and still more so in Louisa county. The records there indicate that there was frequent intermarriage among them—mostly of second and third cousins.

THE OHIO HARRIS ANCESTRY

The Ohio Harris posterity (descendants of Hon. James Harris) with whom this volume largely deals, are descended from “Thomas Harris¹, Gentleman,” born about 1550, whose home was near Bristol, England. It is believed that he was the son of Arthur Harris, born 1520, but this has not been definitely established. The Harris name is so abundant in that section of England that it seemed absolutely useless, unless one were there in person, to attempt to trace back the line of descent further.

John, born in 1588, the son of this Thomas Harris, came to America as already noted in 1611, a member of the Third Virginia Charter. He had at least three sons: John Jr., Thomas, and William; it is believed there was a fourth, Edward. Two of these located further up the James River, and one of them became the father of Henry Harris, our next ancestor; it has not been found possible to tell which one, for both the piecemeal records and family tradition simply allude to Henry as the “Grandson of John Harris, member of the Third Virginia Charter at Jamestown.”

¹The original book had “John Harris” here, an obvious error.

This is the Henry Harris mentioned in a small book, "The Harris Family of Virginia, 1611-1914," by Thomas Henry Harris of Fredericksburg, Va. In this it is stated that "Henry Harris was given in 1691 a tract of ten square miles of land on the south side of the James River, by King William and Queen Mary." Diligent search in the Land Office at Richmond failed to reveal any record of this grant, but there is no question such was made; for some twenty families settled there and a small town, Manakin, was built. A grant of ten square miles of wilderness land was not so valuable then as it might seem now.

As Henry was probably past 50 years of age when he obtained the tract, and had but one son, he might have felt it too great an undertaking to fulfill the conditions of the grant and so allowed it to revert to the grantors. At least none of the descendants of Henry seem ever to have occupied the land. Henry Harris had but the one son, Edward, our next ancestor. He married in 1697 and lived somewhere up the James River above Richmond. He had a family of five sons and eight daughters. The names of these were given the writer's father in 1873 by Louisa Hutchinson, at that time a teacher in the schools of Norfolk, Va., and herself a descendant of one of Edward's daughters, who had married a Hutchinson. But at that time he was little interested in family ancestry and paid no attention to any of the names but that of his own ancestor, John, an older son of Edward. If his father made any note of the names it can not be found. Thorough search of all available Virginia records, especially in the State Library at Richmond failed to reveal the names of this Edward's children. The writer recalls that one of Edward's daughters had married a Churchill and some of her descendants, who were in the federal offices at Washington, D. C., occasionally visited their Ohio relatives. U. S. Senators Isham G. Harris of Tennessee, and W. A. Harris, of Kansas, were descendants of Henry Harris, as well as probably Joel Chandler Harris ("Uncle Remus").

John Harris, our next ancestor, and an older son of Edward, born about 1700, married a Maryland girl and located in Prince George's County, in that state, just east of where the District of Columbia was later laid out. Including this John the writer has complete court and family records on down to the present, and the wills of four generations, from John, inclusive. Tradition says that John had a middle name by which his father called him, but that John did not like it, and always signed his name simply "John," to legal papers, etc.

He acquired several hundred acres of land in Maryland, farmed extensively, and owned several slaves. As was the custom he left the land to his oldest living son. According to his

will, dated Sept. 2, 1775, and probated 1776, in that county, he had the following family: Sons, James, Benjamin, John. Daughters and their husbands: Anne, m- Owen; Elizabeth, m- Wilson; Mary, m- Burch; Eleanor, m- Wedding; and Sarah, m- Robey.

James (Edward) our next ancestor, and John's oldest son, had died, and so John left the land, livestock and equipment to the next son, Benjamin. But he provided, "It is my will and desire that Edy Harris, relict of my son, James, may have, hold, occupy, and peaceably enjoy during her widowhood, all that part of the aforesaid lands lying west of the small branch running from Pomohkey Road through the plantation where my son James lived." This embraced quite a tract of land, sufficient for the support of the widow and her children. He had already given his son, John, his share of the estate, and each of his daughters a substantial dowry at her marriage. But he left each a substantial sum of money in his will and certain household goods. He had already made arrangements for the freedom of what slaves he owned, except that, "I give and bequeath to my Grandson, John Harris Robey (a namesake) one Negro Man named Langoe." This was due the fact that the grandson, then but a few years old, and Langoe, the slave, had taken quite a fancy to each other.

The will of James (Edward) the deceased son of John, and our next ancestor, was dated June 25, 1775. He had acquired no land but had been farming one of his father's plantations, and owned at his death a large lot of livestock, farm equipment and other chattels, besides money. His older sons were abundantly able to "carry on" when James died, and that was why John, the father, had provided in his will that James' widow have the plantation "during her widowhood." Like his father, James discarded the middle name, Edward, which had been given him, and signed simply "James," to all documents.

According to James' will his family consisted of, sons: William, John, James, Josias and Basil; daughters: Elizabeth and Edy. Following is the important part of the will: "I give and bequeath unto my Dearly Beloved Wife Edy, one-third part of my Goods and Chattels of all kinds whatsoever that is now Enjoyed or Possessed by me—Item, The remaining part of my goods and Chattels I give and bequeath to my four children (viz.) Josias, Edy, James and Basil, to be equally divided among them, excepting one Brindle Heifer two years old this Spring past, which I give to my Grandson Bartin, (son of William Harris) to be enjoyed by my said Grandson Bartin, with the increase that may come from said heifer. It is my Will and desire that my sons, William and John, and my daughter, Elizabeth, have, possess, and quietly enjoy every of the Goods, Wares, and Articles given them by me at

their marriage or before the date of this my last Will and Testament, hoping they will be satisfied and content with their proportionate part of my Estate.” His wife and son, Josias, were to administer the estate.

James Edward and his brothers and sisters seem to have been very well educated for the times, far more so than their father, John, whose youth was passed in the general illiteracy that prevailed during the first century or more of the colony’s existence. This general lack of education was in part due to the large plantations and “County System,” so that unlike New England which had the small towns or townships, there were few centers for education. Besides there were not the long, cold winters when people had to remain indoors; and the settlers were so busy clearing the land, building homes and making furniture, securing food, raising and preparing materials for clothing, making this or the skins of animals into garments, and protecting themselves against wild beasts and savage Indians, to bother much about such non-essentials as reading and writing. In fact it was often a man’s boasts that he could not read or write; the implication being that he had been too busily engaged in more important matters!

William Harris, oldest son of James and Edy (Barton?) Harris, and our next ancestor, was born August 11, 1747. In 1769 he married Susanna Winn, born December 26, 1753.

THE WINN ANCESTRY

At least four Winn families, all related to each other and that of Susanna, came from Kent and Sussex counties, England, and located in Virginia, 1640-1690. There were several others that came later, so that the name became quite frequent in parts of the colony. Another family also related to the Susanna family came with William Penn and took part in the founding of Philadelphia, 1682. Many of the Winn families belonged to the newly organized religious sect of “Friends” or Quakers. They became quite numerous in Virginia and western Maryland by 1776.

Fragmentary records show that the family of Susanna was closely related to three others. From these records and information “handed down” through succeeding generations the grandfather of Susanna was George Winn, who came from Kent county, England, with his parents in 1683. James, a son of this George, located and reared his family in western Maryland, where she became acquainted with William Harris.

All the Winn families were active on the patriot side in the Revolution. John, a brother of Susanna, enlisted April 25, 1777, in Col. Grayson's regiment. Another John Winn, a cousin to Susanna, was in the Second Maryland regiment and discharged August 16, 1780. He had been captured by the British and confined on one of the notorious "prison ships" till his health was ruined, as was the case with many such captives. Of the four Winns enlisted from Virginia, two appear to have been second cousins of Susanna: James, enrolled February 8, 1780; Boling, who served in the Virginia Artillery. Two others, Elisha, and Thomas Winn, were distant relatives.

William and Susanna settled down on the plantation left to his mother "during her widowhood" and the husband was a farmer on quite a large scale; they established a comfortable home and were happy in rearing a family. But the Revolution soon came on and the husband, with four little children dependent on him, was forced to take up arms for his country.

The records of the U. S. War Department are naturally very incomplete in matters of the Revolution, as there was then no real central government; often the state records are far more reliable. The U. S. War Dept. records show that there were in all three men named William Harris from Maryland in the Revolution. The description of one of these shows him to have been our ancestor William, and the record is: William Harris, 1st private. Shows pay commenced January 1, 1782." This is the only data in the U. S. Records. The following letter however from the Military Department of Maryland establishes clearly the enlistment of William Harris, our ancestor, in the Patriot Army of the Revolution.

STATE OF MARYLAND

MILITARY DEPARTMENT, ANNAPOLIS

January 26, 1928

Mr. F. B. Harris, Lebanon, Ohio.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your letter of January 23, 1928, you are advised as follows in respect to one William Harris who served in the Revolutionary War from Maryland:

William Harris (Prince George's County) Passed for service, 27th January, 1780, for 3 years or during the war. (Passed by Col. Barton Lucas).

The above is the only record we have; very truly yours,

Signed—Leslie Medford, per Captain C. M. C.

The extract from the letter of the U. S. War Dept. and the one given in full from Maryland Military Department fully establish the fact of our ancestor, William Harris' services in the Revolution; for he was the only William Harris enrolled from Prince George's County, Md.

Owing to the unsettled conditions of the times records of all kinds, especially of military matters, are in general fragmentary and incomplete. And quite often where records were kept they became missing afterward. Also the soldiers were sometimes not paid for long periods and their service was often irregular. As William had a family of small children he was probably excused at times to look after them. This was not at all uncommon. Both of the grandfathers of the writer's own father were in the Revolution. But one of these, Captain Win. Cherry, was so prominent that he overshadowed the other, William Harris, to whom much less attention was naturally paid. But the writer recalls that his father related many stories and incidents of his Grandfather William Harris in the Revolution: stories that William had told his own children and by them passed on down to their own posterity; also that Colonel Lucas figured in some of these. The Colonel it seems was noted for his plain speaking, and his pungent, often witty, but sometimes very emphatic expressions.

To William and Susanna were born the following children: Barton, September 8., 1771; George 5., February 25, 1773; James, December 22, 1775; Fielder Bowie, August 16, 1781; Elizabeth, March 16, 1783; Sarah Ann, November 8, 1787; Josiah, born but soon expired, probably 1790. For a sketch of each of these except James, see Connections, Part IV.

The plantation where William lived was to be held by his mother "during her widowhood," and then passed to the second son, Benjamin. So after the death of his mother William moved to Loudoun county, Virginia, in 1789, where he lived twenty years. He was a farmer and tradesman and evidently fairly well-to-do; for he reared his family well and gave them each an exceptionally good education, for those days, as shown by various letters written by them; several of these are in the possession of the writer. As was the custom then, even among the fairly wealthy, each son was trained to some trade in an apprenticeship by the thrifty father. All were reared in habits of industry and so became ready and capable to act as need might arise in the world's affairs.

In 1805 the father made a will bequeathing his property to his wife “her life time, in case she outlives me;” it was then to be sold and divided equally among his living children. But the parents followed their children to Ohio and William used most of the proceeds of his Virginia property to help his children get started in their new homes. He passed away at the home of his son, James, May 7, 1810. His wife, Susanna, lived a peaceful old age at the home of her son, James, passing away July 5, 1822. Both were buried in the cemetery on the James Harris farm. The grave of William was the first one there; marble tombstones mark the place.

James Harris, third son of William, and our next ancestor, was born December 22, 1775. Soon after his father moved to Virginia James was apprenticed to James T. Young to learn the carpenter and building business; for every youth was then expected to “learn a trade” by which he might later support himself should it become necessary. James appeared to have fared quite well; for Mr. Young treated him as one of the family and instructed and trained him so well that when his apprenticeship was finished he set up for himself and developed quite a business of his own. This was at Charles Town in the adjoining county of Jefferson.

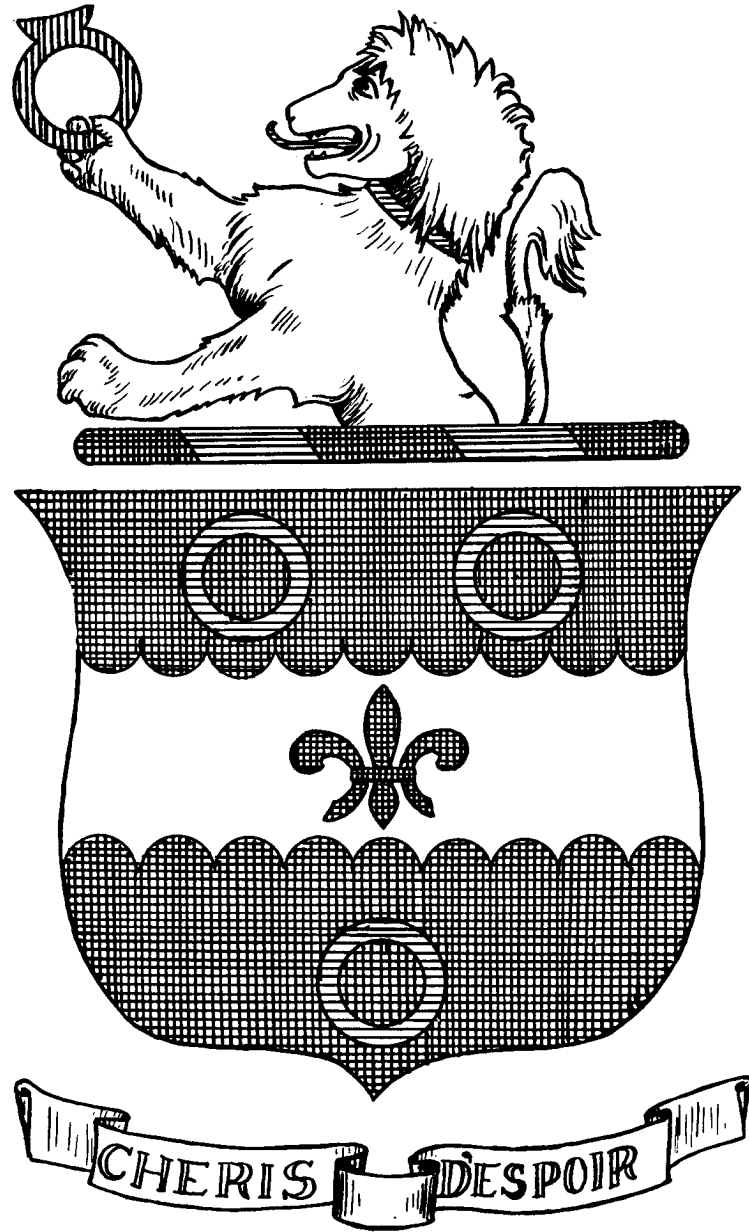
It may be interesting to note that after his apprenticeship and before setting up for himself James was employed some months as a carpenter on the National Capitol Building then being erected at Washington, D. C.

James soon associated with himself as a partner, a cousin, Thomas Austin, also from Prince George’s county, Md. The father of this cousin, who was also named Thomas, had married a sister (Edy or else Elizabeth) of William Harris. The partners soon established a flourishing business in building and construction. This they disposed of for a goodly sum when together they left Charles Town for Ohio in 1809. Some of the houses erected by these two men were still in existence when the writer made his first visit to Charles Town in 1927.

Meantime James had met and courted, Mary Cherry, who after taking care of her father for some years had been left an orphan over two years before. The two were married December 17, 1805. Her father was William Cherry who had served several years as a captain in the Revolution, and who had been a wealthy and prominent citizen of the city. As the history of these two now blend it is in place to trace the ancestry of our next forebear, Mary Cherry.

THE CHERRY COAT OF ARMS

On the opposite page is the coat of arms used by the first Cherry family (Jean Cheri) in England. It is quite likely that family name, Cherry, developed from the word "Cheris" in the motto. This in earlier French may be taken as meaning "Darlings", a substantive; in later French as "Cherished", a participle. Some minor changes appear in the coat of arms later. In some the rings are all of gold instead of part being red. The rings on the shield above seem to indicate that Jean was the fifth son. It was probable he had no inheritance in France and possibly his father gave him the English lands.



   
BLUE RED GOLD SILVER

